

# GRAND PATH THE GREAT POET



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*This Book is Published by* **Bharateeya Lalita Kala Peetham,**  
19-88/36, Prasant Nagar, Hyderabad - 500 062, A.P., INDIA.  
Phone : 91-40-7125893

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# **GRAND PATH THE GREAT POET**

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First Edition : October, 1999.

Number of Copies : 1000

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**D/o. Dr. Vellanki Umakanta Sastry**

Price : **Rs. 20/-, U.S.A. \$ 5**

## ***Cover Page Design :***

N. Karunakar, B.Sc., BFA., PGDJ. Artist, Visual Lines,  
6-3-668/15/4, Punjagutta, Opposite to Kanti Sikhara Apts.  
Hyderabad - 500 082. Ph : 03325704

*Copies are available at :*

### **1. Bharateeya Lalita Kala Peetham**

19-88/36, Prashant Nagar,  
ECIL Post, Hyderabad - 500 062., A.P., INDIA.

### **2. Visalandhra Publishing House**

4-1-435, Vijnan Bhavan  
Bank Street, Hyderabad - 500 001. A.P., INDIA.

&

All branches of Visalandhra Book House  
at Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Visakha Pattanam,  
Guntur, Tirupati, Hanumakonda, Anantapuram, Kakinada.

*Printing :*

Kala Jyothi Process Limited,  
1-1-60/5, Iftekar Mansion Lane, RTC Cross Roads, Musheerabad,  
Hyderabad - 500 020, A.P., Ph. : 91-40-7645536

**DEDICATED**  
**TO MOTHER INDIA**  
**WITH AFFECTION AND DEVOTION**

## PREFACE

The early part of the sixteenth century (1509-1530) was considered to be the Golden age in the history of Vijayanagara empire. Sri Tuluva Krishnadevaraya, a great Indian emperor, ruled the Vijayanagara empire extending over a large portion of the present Andhra Pradesh and a portion of the Karnataka state. Vijayanagaram (near Hampi) which is on the bank of river Tungabhadra was the capital of this great kingdom.

Sri Krishnadevaraya was a great scholar and he was well known for his valour. He was assisted by Saluva Timmarusu, a great minister, whose vision and wisdom were responsible in extending the empire and in protecting the Indian culture.

History shows that there were several poets and scholars in the court of Krishnadevaraya. It also speaks that several stones carved by sculptors turned into marvellous idols with full of life, and several pillars erected in the empire sing the glory of the king. The works of the poets of the Vijayanagara empire, the remnants of the artistic pieces of the empire and the river Tungabhadra, flowing with thrill of joy due to its memories, stand as witnesses for the grandeur of the empire.

Tenali Ramakrishna was one of the famous poets in the court of Krishnadevaraya. His wit and spontaneity of thought were unparalleled and people remember him forever. Tatacharya was a great scholar and a priest in the court.

The present play is related to the son of Tatacharya and it portrays an interesting episode. It gives an insight into the culture, literature and art of that time in India. It also introduces the basic features of 'Astavadhanam' an art of poetry, which had its inception in the time of Kalidasa and has been performed as a special item in Andhra Pradesh.

This play is dedicated to Mother India. A poem entitled 'An Ode to Mother Land' is included at the beginning of this book.

Read and enjoy the play.

Kharagpur  
January 1, 1995

(V. Umakanta Sastry)

# AN ODE TO MOTHER LAND

Oh mother! we bow our heads before you  
and pray you to see us with a kind view.  
Never we forget what all you gave  
Smile a little being brave.

What a fine mansion you built for this nation  
with all your vision and imagination!  
North is bound by Himalayas in sky  
East and West with mountains high.

You made the sea to care you and greet  
with waves which touch your lovely feet.  
You allowed the rivers to flow on plains  
with a gentle voice as a musician trains.

The richness of you with mines everywhere  
The serenity of you with temples rare  
The green fields with corn and fruits  
join our tones with cuckoo's notes.

Vedas and Upanishads carved your future.  
You stored in you centuries culture  
You said to all 'Unity is God'  
You are the shape of nobility indeed.

Valmiki and Vyasa created epics;  
Jina and Buddha preached ethics;  
Sankara showed God in man;  
We lived for centuries as a great clan.

Saints and poets borne in this land  
drank your milk with affection and demand  
They sang your glory far and wide  
and led our nation with divine stride.

Never you worried for others' invasion;  
Never you felt for your children's depression  
You advised us all to live together  
with happiness as birds of same feather.

~~Know~~

"No your bounds and live as friends;  
Time will heal all the wounds.  
Open your eyes and hearts sons;  
Never resort to swords and guns.

Care for unity and care for strength;  
Care to nurture people at length.  
Forget the divisions of caste and religion."  
These are the mottoes you spelt with vision.

No word of you entered our thoughts;  
No request of you touched our hearts.  
We learnt our lesson after a long fight  
and moved by you to a grave sight.

We saw our people with wide open mouths  
having no food, shelter and clothes.  
We saw the tyranny of foreign sceptre  
which shipped our riches from every sector.

You came into field with boldness regained  
and found leaders whom you crowned.  
You induced in us a spirit of nation  
and made us to fight for freedom with devotion.

Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Bose --  
they were the leaders who kept us on toes.  
We all marched ahead and ahead  
and made to roll the British head.

Got the country, got the freedom  
for which we fought bravely with wisdom.  
We flew our flag with great pomp  
to mark our joy with sovereign stamp.

No minutes had lapsed; alas we had  
strife and bloodshed amid our bad  
brothers who fought to share the soil.  
They created in you a bitter turmoil.

Heads rolled on earth and flowed blood  
in gangetic plains which became red.  
Land was broken on the lines of religion  
which made short the human vision.

## GRAND FATH THE GREAT FOET

"No more to worry; be cheerful.  
Make your land glorious and peaceful.  
Build up your fort with bricks of truth  
and shun the violence -- a dirty path.

Be united and nurture grand democracy.  
Never allow the growth of wild bureaucracy.  
Leave drugs and liquors for better life"  
you said through Gandhi to forget the strife.

Bullets stuck the swan divine.  
No blood no grief though in strain  
It lost its wings and fell on earth  
Gandhi let lose his ultimate breath.

We lost leaders with rolling time.  
We lost leaders due to country's crime.  
We lost Indira and Rajiv brave;  
We moved our country towards grave.

Punjab burnt in furious flames!  
Assam saw its ugly times!  
Kashmir in terror struck with grief!  
Can we find any relief!

Oh mother! why don't you talk?  
Are you mute and not able to speak?!  
Are you dreaded by all this sight?!  
Are you worried due to your plight?!

Never it happens -- I am sure.  
You are thinking for a better cure.  
Would you tell us what you think;  
We hope to have a better link.

Are you worried about soaring prices?  
Are you worried about devouring vices?  
Are you worried about corruption in nation?  
Are you worried about growing population?

Are you ashamed of the debt of crores  
which our country is getting from others' stores?  
Are you ashamed of this country's dependence  
for technology and skill after independence?

Are you shocked to see crimes in Gods' name?  
Are you shocked to see the elections' defame?  
Are you shocked to see the blood in every part?  
Are you shocked to see the greed in every heart?

Are you shattered by seeing the dowry burnings?  
Are you shattered by seeing the rape case mournings?  
Are you shattered by seeing the unrest of naxalites?  
Are you shattered by seeing the unending army fights?

Oh mother! why do you laugh at me  
with glee on your face and half open lips?  
I know you are totally free  
from all the worries of inhuman steps.

You are pure at your heart like Ganges.  
You are firm and bold as Himalayan ranges.  
You are deep as sea whose depth is unknown;  
but you can be known from your kind tone.

What a thought--to me is clear!  
It is a splendid voice; I am able to hear.  
You are in search of leaders bold  
who can steer us from miseries hold.

Would you like to see a Patel again?!  
Would you like to have a Nehru's reign?!  
Would you like to find an incarnation of God  
as ethics and values have gone bad.

May I believe in your eternal affection?  
May I believe in your activities perfection?  
May I assure myself with all hope  
that you would find indeed a grand scope?

GRAND PATH THE GREAT POET

# GRAND PATH THE GREAT POET

## CHARACTERS

Krishnadevaraya	King of Vijayanagara Empire
Timmarusu	Minister
TenaliRamakrishna	A famous poet
Madhava	State barber
Grand path	A poet who came from England
Vikram	A junior army officer
Jaya	Wife of Vikram
Tatacharya	A priest

UMAKANTA SASTRY

## INVOCATION

Oh! Goddess! thou shalt be in my heart  
to make my voice sweet and pleasant.  
Allow me to sing your musical sounds  
to create a universe of unlimited bounds.

It is you who makes me to feel  
and it is you who wakes my zeal.  
Live in my thoughts with all pleasure  
and lead my hand as you desire.

Analyse for me the entire vision  
and enlighten my views to a new horizon  
Give me your hand to portray the sight  
and make me to act with all your might.

.

## PROLOGUE

Jaya, an young lady, is dressing herself standing in front of a mirror. She has been humming a tune with melodious voice. She has been enjoying a state of ecstasy and laughing at her own image in the mirror. Vikram enters with full enthusiasm.

**Vikram :** Today I saw a wonderful man ! Would you like to know who he is?

**Jaya :** It must be you only. Who else could it be? In the entire day you do not find a minute's time even to visit your newly married spouse. You come in the night . . that too late in the night, and you go on telling all the wonders on the surface of the earth.

[Jaya controls her anger and turns her smiling face away from him]

**Vikram :** Be merciful madam. As my duty is in intelligence department, I am to guard my country more than I guard my lovely princess in my palace. Shall I be at your service?!

**Jaya :** Do not do all those now. Tell me who is that wonderful man.

**Vikram :** A person having a peculiar name called Grand path has come here from England. As our poets can tell poetry in oriental languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil spontaneously, he can tell poetry in English.

**Jaya :** Where did you see him?!

**Vikram :** He has been put up in the choultry of our city.

**Jaya :** Why did he come from such a long distance to this place?

**Vikram :** It appears to me that he is an Indian. But he says that he belongs to England and he does not know any other language except English. He wants to tell poetry in the court of our king Krishnadevaraya. It seems that he has a strong desire to challenge the poets in the court of our king. Most of our court poets do not know English. It appears that Mr. Grand path has an intention to defeat all the poets in the court. And, as I see, he may become the poet laureate in the court of our king.

**Jaya :** I doubt very much. I am quite confident that the witty poet Tenali Ramakrishna and the prudent chief minister Timmarusu will simply vanquish him and crush him into pieces.

UMAKANTA SASTRY

**Vikram** : Keep up your courage. I heard the poetry of that wonderful man. I doubt very much. I think not even one poet will be able to save the prestige of our king in the court. And our chief minister, though clever and tactful, cannot defeat that great poet in poetry.

**Jaya** : You are very timid! I do not know how our king appointed you in the intelligence department!

**Vikram** : Oh! beloved! I know what you will say about me. Let me tell you an important piece of news. From tomorrow onwards my posting is in our King's court. I am appointed as a bodyguard of our king.

**Jaya** : Very fine! Then you are going to see the exciting drama of Grand path, the great poet.

**Vikram** : Sure. Sure. I am going to enjoy.

**Jaya** : After seeing the drama, then tell me the result - whether Grand path wins or loses.

**Vikram** : Sure. I will narrate the drama which will be enacted in the court.

**Jaya** : Get up. Let us have our dinner.

## FIRST SCENE

Krishnadevaraya, monarch of the Vijayanagara empire, is sitting on a chair in a drawing room. The walls of the room are adorned with paintings depicting hills and dales covered with green trees and rivers overflowing with water. The walls are also decorated with dolls made up of tusks. Diamonds, arranged in patterns, are glittering on the walls and throwing light uniformly in all directions of the room. The king is enjoying the melodious voice of a cuckoo.

[Vikram enters into the room]

**Vikram** : My lord! I offer my salutation to you.

[He salutes in the style of an army officer]

**Krishnadevaraya** : [Questions majestically] What urgency has made you to come here?

**Vikram** : My lord! it is indeed a surprise to me. A poet has come from England. He wants to see you, sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : What?!...England!

**Vikram** : Yes sir. He says that he has come from England. His name is Mr. Grand path. He claims that he is a celebrated poet of his country and he can narrate more than hundred poems in an hour, of course, in English. My lord! shall I allow him to enter in?

**Krishnadevaraya** : Let him come in.

[Vikram salutes and exits. Grand path enters with a cheerful face]

**Grand path** : Oh! great emperor of Vijaranagara kingdom!

I fold my hands and pray the Almighty  
to bestow you peace and prosperity.  
It is a pleasure for me to see your vast empire  
where subjects are found with contented desire.

May God bless you, Sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Take your seat [Grand path sits on a chair]. May I know where from you come? And what for you have come?

**Grand path** : Your majesty! I come from England. I have come to visit your Vijayanagara empire.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Have you visited all the parts of our kingdom?! There are several temples with wonderful architecture and there are several historical places which reveal Indian culture. There are several rivers flowing down the hills and there are several fields which are ever green and fertile.

**Grand path** : My lord! I have seen all the places and the wonderful sights. It is really a thrilling experience. Sir! I am a poet ... Would you please allow me to describe the fine sceneries in your land, the grandeur of your empire and my exciting experiences?

**Krishnadevaraya** : Sure, sure. [The king nods his head with a smile]

**Grand path** : Sir! I was really delighted to see your villages, cities, and people who are very courteous. It is a pleasure for me to narrate a poem on several such splendid things which took away my heart. Sir! would you please hear my composition?!

**Krishnadevaraya** : Go ahead.

**Grand path** : Hear me, Sir.

I was on a horse in the middle of a valley  
and heard music which made me jolly.  
I knew not for a moment from where it flowed.  
I found in meadows a flute with a shepherd.

He sang a song with splendid notes,  
which filled my heart with lovely thoughts.  
I moved and moved down the way  
and brought the melody as I was away.

I entered into a city along a road.  
It was a scene which I never viewed.  
Heaps of flowers were there in stalls  
They made my thoughts water falls.

I found their colours from a long distance  
and felt unusual joy to smell their fragrance.  
It was to my utter surprise after a while  
I saw glittering diamonds as a pile.

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I moved with a crowd down a lane  
and found a fine cylindrical stone.  
I saw some people uttering hymns,  
which cooled the thinking of my brains.

I saw Gods and a Goddess in a temple  
and knelt on my heels with all the people.  
I knew not who gave delicious food.  
I ate all that in a blissful mood.

I visited a shrine with several pillars  
and counted all them with joyful tears.  
I placed my hand on some of them  
and heard music with typical rhythm.

I slept on the banks of rivers and seas  
and saw the moon with glittering rays.  
I saw the Sun in crimson red  
while he rises and shines on the horizon bed.

I saw a pond on a beautiful morn  
and found several lotus newly borne.  
I noted the faces of people bathing  
and dipped with joy in water scathing.

**Krishnadevaraya :** You have narrated a lovely poem! I like it from the core of my heart.

**Grand path :** I thank your majesty for your heart felt appreciation.

**Krishnadevaraya :** Let me clarify certain points to you. The cylindrical stone, seen by you, is a God known as Lord Siva. He can bestow peace and prosperity to all people. And he is also capable to destroy the whole universe at a glance. The Gods and the Goddess seen by you are Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Rama is the hero of the epic poem Ramayana written by a great poet known as Saint Valmiki. Lakshmana is the brother of Rama and Sita is the wife of Rama. Rama is well known for his humility, nobility and bravery. He was to relinquish his kingdom in view of the desire of his step mother. He was to live in forest for a period of fourteen years. His wife and brother both accompanied him.

He is a great king who nurtured ethical values. He defeated and killed the king of demons known as Ravana. Rama is considered as an incarnation of God and he is worshipped by all the Indians.

**Grand path** : Sir, what was the food given to me?

**Krishnadevaraya** : The food you had in the temple is the one which was first offered to God, and then served to all the devotees. It is known as prasadam in Sanskrit.

**Grand path** : Sir! I am highly grateful to you for your narration of the wonderful epic story and for the enlightenment you have given to me in respect of your mythology.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Mr Grand path! it seems you have very good control over your language.

**Grand path** : Yes Sir! I read a lot of English literature both ancient and modern. I composed poems right from my childhood. I can tell hundred stanzas per hour on any subject in a fine manner. I can answer all types of questions, related to literature, in the form of poetry.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I am very glad to see a learned scholar and a great poet in English.

**Grand path** : My lord! I heard quite a lot about you right from the minute I entered in India. I came to know that you are a scholar in several Indian languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, etc. I also learnt that you are a very great poet, who wrote a large number of books in Sanskrit and Telugu. I felt the utmost joy to know that there are eight poets appointed by you in your court, and they are very efficient in composing wonderful poems.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Yes, yes. We have several great poets here. They wrote many books in our languages.

**Grand path** : My lord! will it be possible for me to learn your language?

**Krishnadevaraya** : What is there?! It is not difficult to learn our language. However, learning each new language takes some time.

**Grand path** : My lord! may I pray you kindly to let me have a poet's job in your court?

[**Krishnadevaraya** looks at Grand path with surprise]

Sir! If you want, you can put me to any test. All your poets can question me as

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they like. They can ask me to describe any scene. They can demand me to include any set of words in a poem in which I depict any scene of their choice. They can also ask me to solve any riddle by telling the solution in the form of a poem. I can perform successfully all the feats which your poets can carry out in your language. I assure you Sir. Do not give me the job even if I fail to do one event properly. Thoroughly get my potentiality checked. If you find me that I am no way inferior to any one of your court poets, either in intelligence or in wit, then only appoint me as your court poet.

**Krishnadevaraya :** [Smilingly] I do not have any objection. Though you are a good poet, I doubt very much about your ability to answer the questions posed by my poets.

**Grand path :** No sir, I will never be defeated. I am quite confident about my strength.

**Krishnadevaraya :** You have come here as a visitor. Moreover you are an young man. You are yet to come up. Our poets are very great and highly distinguished. And they contributed quite a lot to literature. I do not want to think of arranging competition between poets of unequal abilities.

**Grand path :** My lord! it appears to me that you are apprehending about the inability of your poets to win over me. Kindly do not think in the other way. Consider my offer as a challenge and see that necessary arrangements are made for discussion with your court poets.

**Krishnadevaraya :** Sorry! you are an young man. Do not get excited. I am quite sure you will be defeated. Do not aspire for a poet's post in my court. It will be given to very great poets, who are scholars and intellectual giants. Ask me if you desire any wealth. I can give pearls and diamonds as many as you want. I can see that our horse chariot is arranged for you to travel from here to seaport. Do go away to your country with cherished memories of our kingdom.

**Grand path :** Sir! kindly do not underestimate my ability. I know what I am. No one in your court can defeat me by putting any type of question and any number of questions. I can speak out poetry with excellent rhetoric and wonderful figures of speech. My poems are very delicious and rhythmic. I take the discussion with your poets as a challenge. I earnestly feel going away from this country without competing with your poets is a matter of disgrace to me and to my country. My lord! I take an oath. You take away my head in case your people can defeat me. Otherwise appoint me as a poet in your court and honour me along with your other poets. This is a matter of prestige to me and to my country.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I agree to your proposal. However, I like to know one thing. Being a Britisher, why do you want to become a poet in our court in India!?

**Grand path** : Sir! I like to learn languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, etc. Thus, I want to stay here for some years.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I am very glad to hear your desire. However, readily I cannot arrange the contest as some of my court poets are out of station. Some have gone on pilgrimage, some have been to their home town, and some are unwell. For the present you stay as a guest of our kingdom in our royal guest house. I will inform you later when I will arrange the competition.

**Grand path** : I thank you sir for your affection and hospitality. Sir! can I assure myself that I will be appointed as a court poet if I answer all the questions of your poets?

**Krishnadevaraya** : Sure, why not? I assure you.

**Grand path** : Thank you, sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : [Calls with a dignified tone] May I know who is there?

[Vikram enters and salutes]

**Vikram** : My lord! I am here.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Lead this young man to our royal guest house, and tell the manager of our guest house to arrange all the required facilities for his boarding and lodging in an excellent manner.

**Vikram** : [Bends and salutes] As you order sir.

**Grand path** : [Folds hands] Thank you, sir.

[Vikram shows the path. Grand path and Vikram exit. Krishnadevaraya rests his chin on his hand and starts thinking]

## SECOND SCENE

Krishnadevaraya is sitting in a hall on a chair studded with diamonds. There are a number of paintings on the walls of the hall. One of the paintings exhibits two soldiers fighting with each other with swords. Another one contains a soldier riding on a horse and throwing a spear with his full strength. The next one shows a tiger running along a stream in a dense forest and a soldier chasing it with bow and arrows. The king is looking in a dignified manner and his face is with full of tranquillity.

[Vikram enters]

**Vikram** : Oh King! kindly accept my salutation.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Yes. What is the matter?

**Vikram** : Sir! our honourable chief minister Timmarusu has come to visit you.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Let him come in.

[Vikram leaves the hall. Timmarusu enters in]

**Timmarusu** : May God bless you with hundred years of life to rule this vast empire with right and might.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Appaji! it is a pleasure for me to see you in this early morning. May I know what made you to come here at this hour?

**Timmarusu** : Yesterday I visited the new temple of Rama which is under construction. I was thrilled with joy to see the wonderful sculpture, designed by our sculptors. I felt that these permanent structures of great grandeur would keep up the name and fame of Krishnadevaraya and the Vijayanagara empire for centuries to come. This made me happy and jubilant. As I could not contain all this pleasure within me, I have come here to share with you.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Not only my name Appaji; the infinite amount of caliber and the vision of my great and noble minister Timmarusu will be recorded in the history of India.

**Timmarusu** : Forget all that. I have come to remind you about one important affair.

**Krishnadevaraya** : What is it Appaji?

**Timmarusu** : We are entering into the spring very soon. It will start on the next full moon day. We are to see that arrangements are made on a grand scale for the spring festival. This time all the warriors who fought bravely and ferociously in the recent battle are to be decorated with Sourya Chakras and Parama Vira Chakras. All the artists and the scholars are to be honoured and rewarded with golden ornaments. The festival must be celebrated on a large scale with pomp and glory, and all the people of our country must participate in it. We have to see that excellent musical concerts, fine dance programmes, wonderful dramas, and thrilling discussions of great poets and scholars are to be arranged. I have come here to inform you and then proceed with this programme.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Appaji! I am very glad to hear your proposal. You can instruct our officers to carry it out on a large scale and to make the occasion an excellent one.

**Timmarusu** : Fine. Shall I make a move.

**Krishnadevaraya** : One minute Appaji. I am to tell you an interesting episode. Some one by name Grand path has come here from England, with an intention of visiting our kingdom. He has visited many a fine places of our kingdom, and has been enamoured to stay here itself. He claims that he is a poet who can narrate more than hundred stanzas in an hour, of course, in English. He is very keen to compete with the poets in our court. He says that he can answer the questions of any number of people in poems and he can describe any scene such that one can see it before one's eyes. He had already narrated some poems in my presence. They were very appealing and amusing to me.

**Timmarusu** : Where is he now?

**Krishnadevaraya** : He is put up in our royal guest house.

**Timmarusu** : Do you think that he has come only on that purpose? Or do you suspect him as a spy from England?

**Krishnadevaraya** : I am not at all thinking that he is a spy. I am finding him as a very great poet and a nice fellow. However, you know the security around our royal guest house. Thus there is no problem of that type.

**Timmarusu** : [Smilingly] Then what is your problem? **Krishnadevaraya** : As most of our poets are not knowing English, I feel a little embarrassed to request them to participate in a discussion with the Grand path.

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**Timmarusu** : I understand your feeling. But do remember our potential poet Tenali Ramakrishna who knows English very well is enough to combat and conquer Grand path.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I can rely upon him. However, it is desirable to have some more people taking part in the discussion. If different questions are there from different people on different aspects, then we can all enjoy the thrill of the discussion. And then Grand path who will not be able to answer all those, being in depression, may have to flee away to England.

**Timmarusu** : Have a talk with Tenali Ramakrishna. He will certainly devise a trap with his wisdom. He can definitely put the micky mouse, which comes eagerly for the bait, into the trap.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Thank you for your advice.

**Timmarusu** : Now, I take leave of you.

[Timmarusu exits. Vikram enters.]

**Vikram** : Sir! Madhava, the state barber, has come.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Let him come in. You do one thing for me. Go immediately and inform the poet Tenali Ramakrishna that I want to see him urgently. Bring him along with you.

**Vikram** : As you order, Sir.

[Vikram exits. Madhava enters with his box in his left hand]

**Madhava** : Good morning, Sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Good morning. Come in.

**Madhava** : Sir! I came here right at six O'clock in the morning. As I saw our chief minister Timmarusu, who came to talk with you, I was loitering outside waiting for his departure.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I know you are very sincere.

**Madhava** : Shall I start my activity, Sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Today I am not feeling well. And my mind is preoccupied with some thinking.

**Madhava** : Sir! may I tell you one thing. One must have a good hair cut on a day on which one is unwell and pondering over several matters. I tell you, Sir. Man will become very well and his mind will be free from all the puzzling thoughts once the hair cut is over.

**Krishnadevaraya** : You are right. But anyhow let me have it on tomorrow. Let us have a pleasant talk for some time. Take your seat.

[Madhava sits on a stool]

**Krishnadevaraya** : Madhava! Let me know why you went to England and how you learnt English.

**Madhava** : Sir, that was an adventure in my life.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Tell me in brief how it took place.

**Madhava** : Sir, you know my father Joganna, who is a very good exponent of nadaswara and a barber who can clean any head with any amount of hair within a minute.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Yes, yes, I know him. He was a very popular barber and his hair cut was liked by almost all the people in our city.

**Madhava** : Sir, I learnt the art of hair cutting and playing on nadaswaram from my father.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Your father is a maestro of nadaswaram.

**Madhava** : Yes sir. You know very well that I can sing many ragas more melodiously than my father.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Sure, sure. It is really a pleasure for me to hear your songs every day at dawn.

**Madhava** : Sir, let me tell you. After I learnt nadaswaram and the art of hair cutting from my father, my father started forcing me every day to get a job and earn money. However, I was not willing to join in the profession of my father. One day I approached our great poet Tenali Ramakrishna and requested him to tell me how to write poetry.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Fine! Then...

**Madhava** : Sir, he said that one can learn writing poetry by observing the nature, by touring the country and by praying God. Sir, he also said nature is

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the source of inspiration for all poets. Touring all over the country gives worldly wisdom, and praying God inspires the heart of a poet and instills a thought process required for writing poetry. On hearing his pleasant talk, I thought that I must leave my house and see all the temples all over the country, the rivers which flow from the top of the hills and the sea which extends to a large extent. Thus, one day I started from my house on my horse with a few clothes and my nadaswaram instrument in a bag.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Then...

**Madhava** : I visited several temples, Sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : How could you have money to feed yourself and the horse?!

**Madhava** : Sir, kindly do not mind. Be kind enough to hear me. To speak frankly it is very difficult for a king to survive in some other country. But it is very easy for a barber to live in any country.

[Krishnadevaraya hears barber's conversation with a smile]

Sir, I earned hundreds of rupees on my art...shaving. I wonder sir! There were several places wherein everyone heard my nadaswaram. But no one asked me to give a musical concert.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Did you approach any king for that?!

**Madhava** : No sir.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Then..?

**Madhava** : One day I was sitting on a rock in Kanyakumari. It was a full moon day. I tried to tell a poem. Sir, I narrated the poem spontaneously. It gave me a thrill of joy. In that ecstasy of the joy I started singing on my nadaswaram. At that time there came some sailors. They enquired me the cause for my joy. Sir, I told them I could narrate a poem by observing nature and by visiting several places.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Then

**Madhava** : Then they said - "come along with us. You can travel along with us on the ship. As you travel far and wide you will be able to see many more fine

sceneries and that will help you in writing volumes and volumes of poetry." Thus the desire, which was in the core of my heart - to write poetry, made me to sell away my horse and to start on a voyage along with them.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Thus you went to England.

**Madhava** : Yes sir. After going there they did not allow me to come back to India. They started appreciating my art.

**Krishnadevaraya** : [Eagerly asks] Did they like your playing on nadaswaram? Did you give some musical concerts there?!

**Madhava** : No sir! They did not like my playing on nadaswaram. They liked my art of hair cutting and shaving.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Then what happened to your poetry?

**Madhava** : Sir! How could I write poetry? I was to have some livelihood to earn for my food. Thus I started a saloon. The demand of my saloon was tremendous. I experimented with several styles of hair cutting. I did short hair cut for military people, and very long hair cut for artists and lawyers. I did medium hair cut for teachers and doctors. I also did different types of hair cutting for businessmen. I created several types of moustaches. Sir, it was an exciting experience. I visited some big rich officers' houses with my shaving kit. I shaved some people when they were thinking about their office problems. I shaved some other people when they were sleeping on their chairs. One day, I shaved an officer who was sleeping after drinking up to the tip of his nose. His wife advised me to shave him completely. Sir! she was a terrible lady! As she ordered me I performed clean shaving and left the house before he awoke.

Sir! I earned thousands of pounds in a few months. Sir! hair cutting is a wonderful art!. It is the art which really makes man perfect. The beauty for the face of a man comes only when the man has a perfect hair cut with an appropriate hair style, and it is further enhanced by a suitable moustache trimmed neatly.

The art of hair cutting is far superior to the art of a painter or a sculptor. Ladies are liking their husbands only because of excellent hair cut. Man feels mentally a lot of happiness only with hair cut, Sir.

As I felt the importance of this art, I opened a school of Barber's Art in England and trained hundreds of people in this art.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Then why did you come back from England?

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**Madhava** : Ask me like that sir. At the time of my going to England, I did not inform my mother or father. As I have a lot of affection for my mother and our mother land, I am forced to come back here.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Oh! you are an illustrious son of our soil.

**Madhava** : Sir! Shall I trim your moustache.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Do it.

[Madhava takes out scissors and trims the moustache of Krishnadevaraya finely]

**Krishnadevaraya** : What a fine trimming you have done!

**Madhava** : I told you, sir. Shaving is a fine art. I left off thousands of pounds of income in England and came here only due to my affinity towards our mother land and my parents.

**Krishnadevaraya** : You have done a fine thing.

Madhava : Sir! you know my ability as a scholar of nadaswara and as a great artist of hair cutting. You also know that I am a foreign returned. Why not you may kindly give me a jaghir so that I can rule it and assist you in your administration?

**Krishnadevaraya** : Let us see.

[Vikram enters]

**Vikram** : Sir! May I let you know that our poet laureate Tenali Ramakrishna has come.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Let him come in.

[Madhava exits and Tenali Ramakrishna enters]

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : [raising his right hand] May God bless you, sir with peace and prosperity.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Come in. Take your seat.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : What is the problem sir?! I wonder why you have sent

UMAKANTA SASTRY

a word for me in the early morning even when the Sun has not shone on the eastern hills and the lotuses are still in their drowsy state.

**Krishnadevaraya** : It is an interesting story. A poet by name Grand path has come from England. He can tell hundreds of poems in English in an hour. He wants to compete with our poets. His desire is to get a post of a poet in our court.

**Tennali Ramakrishna** : Where is he now?

**Krishnadevaraya** : He is in our royal guest house. He is very keen to participate in literary discussions with our poets. I told him that he would not be able to win. Even then he is insisting.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Is he a potential fellow?

**Krishnadevaraya** : He is able to narrate spontaneously several poems in English. So it is not so easy for us. Moreover in our poets, except you, no one knows English. Thus it is quite likely that they may not be willing to participate in the discussions with him.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Sir! I am more than enough to see that Grand path eats a humble pie in our court. Let us have the discussion on the coming Saturday in the open court. Though our people cannot follow the content of our discussion, they can fully witness and enjoy the defeat of Grand path.

## THIRD SCENE

It is the court of Krishnadevaraya. Krishnadevaraya and Timmarusu are sitting on their thrones.

**Timmarusu** : Krishnaraya! Though Vedas and Upanishads described several objects and dealt with several subjects, it appears to me that no one knows how the first being came into existence. And it seems that the riddle remains unanswered.

**Krishnadevaraya** : That is the basic cause which led to the development of several theories, philosophies and religions. Though the root cause is not known, we are certain with one point that there is some source of energy which is responsible for this creation.

**Timmarusu** : How that source came into existence?!

**Krishnadevaraya** : [Smilingly] Not known Appaji! Not known.

**Timmarusu** : Let us leave this question. Let us look at the other fantastic aspect of this universe. How human being developed communication skills?! How a set of people had some language in which they communicated with each other?!

**Krishnadevaraya** : Human beings started feeling joy and sorrow by their interaction among themselves and with nature. When they tried to express their joy and sorrow, they could ventilate them in terms of sounds. Each being imitated the other and followed the other. This led to a language. However, as there was no communication between one set of people and another set of people, living in different parts of the universe, and as different people expressed their feelings with different sounds, different languages grew causing differences in people.

**Timmarusu** : See the wonder! Each human being has expressed his feelings in terms of movements of limbs, movements of tongue which produced sounds. This led to dance, music, languages, poetry and literature.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Notice one aspect Appaji. In the poetry of all languages the common concept is representation of some aspect of universe beautifully in terms of words. And the words are arranged so that their patterns can reveal the content of the poem effectively. Inherently each poem comes out with a music embedded in it which we may call as metre. And the metre associated with a rhythm makes the poem appealing to the ear and amusing to the heart.

[Vikram enters]

**Vikram** : Oh King! kindly accept my salutations. Sir! Let me inform you that Mr. Grand path is waiting for your permission.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Let him enter.

[Vikram exits and Grand path enters]

**Grand path** : Oh Great King! Good morning. Oh honourable minister! Good morning.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Good morning.

**Timmarusu** : Good morning.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Take your seat.

[Grand path takes his seat]

**Grand path** : Sir! It seems none of your poets has come so far.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I told you some days back. Some are out of station and some are unwell. However, some are expected to come in a few minutes.

[Tenali Ramakrishna and Madhava enter. They fold their hands and greet the king and the minister. The king and the minister nod their heads with a smile]

**Krishnadevaraya** : He is our great poet Tenali Ramakrishna.

**Grand path** : [Smilingly] Good morning sir!

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Good morning. Good morning.

**Krishnadevaraya** : [Showing Madhava] He is a great musician and a great scholar of fine arts. He writes poetry too. His name is Madhava.

**Grand path** : Good morning.

**Madhava** : Good morning.

**Grand path** : Sir! I have seen Mr. Madhava somewhere.

**Krishnadevaraya** : You might have seen him in England. He visited England on the request of Britishers. He gave music concerts of nadaswaram in different parts of England.

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**Grand path** : Sure, sure. I might have seen him on some stage.

**Timmarusu** : Let us start our discussion with Grand path.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Mr. Grand path is a poet belonging to England. He does not know any language other than English. He says that he can tell spontaneously hundred poems in an hour. He wishes to join in our court as a poet if we find him suitable. Let us start questioning.

**Timmarusu** : Why do you want to stay in India? Don't you like your mother land?!

**Grand path** : [Smilingly] Sir!

I like my country which is neat;  
I like my language which is sweet;  
I like my people who are fine;  
I like to sing my native tune.

May I tell you, Sir! why I want to be  
Here in this land with knowledge towers?  
It is a pleasure for me to be as a bee  
which sucks the honey of language flowers.

**Timmarusu** : Oh! you like to learn several languages. It is really a fine desire.

**Krishnadevaraya** : You have said a very nice poem. Hear my question. A boatman started to sail on a boat in a sea. He was singing a song while rowing the boat. A lady related to the boatman was standing on the shore with a kid in her hands. She heard the song of the boatman as long as she could see him. She left off the place with a heavy heart once he was out of vision. Would you describe this scene?

**Grand path** : [Smilingly] It is a lovely scene, Sir. Please hear the poem.

Oh kid ! look at the boat  
moving ahead and ahead.  
It rolls on the waves  
as the boatman rows with oars.

May I tell you  
about the boatman;  
He is your kinsman  
who fetches fish afresh.

He finds the glittering waves  
as the Sun rises and shines.  
He sees the playful fishes  
as they rush and dazzle.

He sings a sweet song  
as the boat gallops like a horse  
He moves down and down  
as the wind shows the course.

Hear his melodious voice  
which sounds notes of his choice.  
It has become feeble and feeble  
as he moves yon and yon.

Let us no more try  
to see the boat's mast.  
Let us no more wait  
for him on the coast.

Let us move away from his thoughts  
and control slowly our heavy hearts.  
Let him come back and join  
as the moon shines on the horizon.

**Krishnadevaraya** : It is a pleasant description! We all enjoyed your verse.

**Madhava** : Sir! You asked a straightforward question which can be answered by any poet. Let us see how Mr. Grand path responds to my question.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Go ahead.

**Madhava** : Do you know that Himalayas are smaller than many other hills?! Why?!

**Grand path** : Hear me carefully.

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Himalayas are smaller than many other hills  
in the drawing drawn by a beginner.

Himalayas are smaller than many other hills  
in the dream dreamt by a drunkard who drank heavily.

Himalayas are smaller than many other hills  
when the scholars with knowledge are looked down by a layman  
Himalayas are smaller than many other hills  
when they dip into the ocean at the culmination of the world.

**Timmarusu** : Mr. Grand path! hear my question. A mother loses her baby in a festival. She goes on searching for the baby. She looks at the back of a baby of similar type and hugs him. But he was not her baby. The baby's mother, who was talking with some other lady, readily notices this and blames the mother. The mother sheds tears and goes on searching for her baby with rolling tears. Ultimately she finds her baby near a shop. Would you tell this in the form of a poem. Do remember. You have to include the words

Sold, wild, gold, crown, mood, bounds, hands  
retreat, distress, fist, further, stern.

**Grand path** : Sir! please remember the words. I am to include the words sold, wild, gold, crown, mood, bounds, hands, retreat, distress, fist, further, stern. Please hear the poem.

Dear baby! hear my cry!  
Nowhere can I find you near by!  
I searched the lanes busy;  
I stepped into the places dizzy.

I saw the shops where sweets are sold;  
I entered into the corners where balloons are unfold.  
I looked at the places where kites are displayed;  
I visited the spot where jugglery is played.

Oh God !

Why should I come into the festival crowd?!  
Why should I move in a forgetful mood?!  
Why should I lose my dear child?!  
It is the fate - cruel and wild!

Is that my child? Is this my child?  
No! it is not my kid -- he is red.  
The colour of my child is gold  
And he has curly hair all over his head.

She saw with her eyes at the back of a boy  
and shouted at him with unlimited joy.  
She hugged the baby at her bosom  
and shed tears as her eyes bloom.

"Oh devil! why have you taken my boy  
into your arms with such a joy.  
Are you a thief who steals children?"  
Cried a lady with voice stern.

She caught the mother's hairs with left fist  
and slapped her cheeks with vigour utmost.  
The mother came to senses and noted the fuss.  
It was not her baby to her distress!

"I thought it was my lad" murmured the mother  
she folded her hands and said further  
"I lost my son somewhere in the crowd  
and I search for him being sad."

Tears rolled on her cheeks.  
Her eyes reeled as she walks.  
She lost her hope; with a broken heart  
she was about to retreat and ready to depart.

She looked at a shop as if she were in dream  
and found her son chewing an icecream.  
She ran with joy which new no bounds  
and lifted the boy with wide open hands.

**Timmarusu** : What a lovely poem you have said?!

**Madhava** : Mr. Grand path! Will you answer my question?

**Grand path** : Tell me what you want?

**Madhava** : Hear my question. I do a business with no investment. I am the person who keeps every one in jovial mood. Who am I?

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**Grand path** : [Smilingly] You are a joker. Please don't mind.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Good you have done a fine job! Answer my question. A lover and a lass are sitting on a sea-beach. It is a full moon day. They are talking with each other. Describe how they spend the whole night. Remember the poem must not contain 'i' and 'u'.

Grand path : [Turning toward Krishnadevaraya] Sir! Mr. Tenali Ramakrishna has shown me a glamorous scene. My job is to forget you and I and describe the blissful moment. Hear me sirs.

Oh dear !

Look at the moon who has shone;  
Look at the stars that are borne;  
Look at the sky over the ocean;  
Look at the God's lovely scene.

Oh beloved!

The cool breeze has warmed my heart  
The rays of the moon have become hot.  
Why not we be near and near?  
And share the joys that are rare.

Oh dear!

Do not be restless and eager to eat  
the whole apple mellow and sweet.  
Do keep thy ear close to my breast  
and hear the song from the core of my heart.

Oh beloved!

Men and women have gone from shore;  
None can know how we are.  
Forget thy shyness and come closer.  
Allow me to embrace once forever.

**Krishnadevaraya** : You have said a beautiful lyric. In your poem it seems that there is not even one word which contains the letter 'i' or the letter 'u'. It is a splendid poem!

**Grand path** : Thank you for your appreciation, sir.

**Madhava** : Hear me Mr. Grand path. Rats took away an elephant into their bore! Am I right?

**Grand path** : Yes, yes. You are perfectly right. Hear the poem.

A king and a queen played chess.  
They found the game as an awkward mess.  
None could lose; none could win  
They ended the play as a draw in vain.

They spoke and spoke about their amusement  
and packed the pieces but for an elephant  
There came rats from a nearby bore  
and drew the elephant into their store.

**Madhava** : You have said a nice poem.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Mr. Grand path! tell me a poem on this theme. A dancer is dancing in the portico of a temple. She sees God in every tree and in every stone. She closes her eyes with devotion. Then she finds God within herself.

**Grand path** : Possibly this is a question related to your Hindu philosophy. Am I right?

**Krishnadevaraya** : Yes. We see God in every part of the universe.

**Grand path** : Hear the poem, sir.

Would you behold the vision which is divine.  
A dancer is there in front of a shrine.  
She closes her eyes while she bends  
and offers flowers with rosy hands.

The melody of the notes moves her thoughts  
She steps her feet with rhythmic beats  
Her heart in tune with lovely notion  
moves her eyes with splendid emotion.

She finds a deity in every tree  
and hears a hymn from every stone.

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She shuts her eyes in blissful mood  
and finds God in her heart's abode.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Oh! you have said a very good poem.

**Madhava** : Please answer my question. Generally my questions are simple. Am I right?

**Grand path** : Sure, sure.

**Madhava** : Then hear my question. What will happen if the Moon comes in the day and the Sun comes in the night.

**Grand path** : What a simple question you have put! Day becomes night and night becomes day. Am I right?

**Madhava** : Yes, yes.

**Timmarusu** : Hear my question. A green forest was caught by wild fire and it was burning with high flames. The beasts in the forest tried to run away. They ran to a temple which was away from the forest. Would you tell a poem wherein you keep ADFGH NRTW as first letters of the lines and EKMNS as the last letters of the lines.

**Grand path** : Oh! I have to keep ADFGH NRTW as first letters of the lines and EKMNS as the last letters of the lines. Very good. Sir! hear the poem.

Flames! Flames! everywhere!  
No more we find way from fire!  
All the jungle burnt to ashes!  
All the forest covered with flashes!

Green leaves turned black!  
Trees are falling as they crack!  
Water boiled rouses fume.  
Rocks roll as hillocks scream.

None shall wait a minutes span.  
Run on heels as you can.  
Dear friends God is there.  
He will save with all care.

**Timmarusu** : [with joy] You have said a splendid poem.

**Madhava** : Hear me. Some people enjoy when they are in sea, while some other people suffer. Why?

**Grand path** : It is obvious. Those who are in a sturdy boat enjoy with confidence, while those in the leaky boat suffer with diffidence.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Oh! you are quite confident. Tell me a poem including the lines that I am going to narrate.

**Grand path** : Okay.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Hear the lines :

The baby sings a lullaby  
while the mother is in the cradle.

Keep these two lines as the last lines of a stanza.

**Grand path** : The baby sings a lullaby while the mother is in the cradle. Very good riddle. Sir! hear the poem.

A mother showed the moon as a toy  
and made a boy to eat with joy.  
She swang the baby on a horse saddle  
and tried to sleep him in a cradle.

She laid herself on a cot  
and sang a song which is sweet.  
It put the boy fast asleep  
and made herself to be in slēep.

Could he really sleep? - No! never;  
He peeped through a window at the ripples of a river  
He saw cows grazing at an end;  
He found his friends playing on the sand.

He heard the melodious tunes  
sung by air filled in bambooes  
He saw the moon light  
spread on the water which is bright.

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He ran out of the house making no noise.  
The mother dreamt and cried with feeble voice.  
"Oh! the baby sings a lullaby  
while the mother is in the cradle".

**Krishnadevaraya** : You have said a wonderful poem. It is depicting universality. I do not know whether you know it or not. You have described Lord Krishna and his mother Yasoda, who are well known in our epics.

**Grand path** : Sir! I read a story of similar type in English, of course, translated from German language. And recently when I visited Mathura and Brindavan in India I saw somewhere a fine painting which portrayed all these images.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Oh! you have visited north India also!

**Grand path** : Yes, sir!

**Madhava** : Would you answer my question? Hear me very well. My question is this. Each artist creates his own world. Can one enjoy when he enters into the world of the other?

**Grand path** : [Smilingly] I know you are also an artist. I am quite sure that I cannot be comfortable if I enter into your world. Similarly you may not be happy if you peep into my universe. However, I am sure that there are quite a large number of people who can enjoy the art of the other. It depends upon their artistic eye and wide open heart.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Mr. Grand path! hear my story carefully. A person did penance for several years. A Goddess appeared before him and gave all the riches she had. He performed penance again. Then another Goddess came and gave all her energy. He thought that he was superior to both the Goddesses. Then he worshipped the Goddess of Wisdom. Would you complete this story and narrate this in the form of a poem?

**Grand path** : The story is very fine. Please hear the poem, sir.

A person cut down all the relations  
which bonded him like iron chains.  
He scoffed at all the worldly pleasures  
and shunned from heart all desires.

He walked aloof and crossed a jungle  
and reached a dale where none to mingle.  
He sat as if he were on a lotus  
and started penance which is vigorous.

No water of a stream did he touch.  
No fruit of a tree did he search.  
No air he cared to breathe for living.  
Never he opened eyelids for seeing.

Nights and days passed alike.  
All the seasons became like.  
No wind or rain moved him an inch.  
No fire of forest could ever pinch.

Sound he uttered echoed in forest;  
It came to the notice of every beast.  
All the nature became calm.  
All the beings felt for him.

There came the Goddess - lotus eyed.  
She blessed the man with hand swayed.  
He opened his eyes as flowers blossom  
and washed her feet with tears stream.

"May I know what you need?"  
asked the Goddess with voice splendid  
"I want riches all those you have"  
replied the man becoming brave.

"What will you do with so much wealth?"  
questioned the Goddess with utter surprise  
"I use all that for the welfare of the earth"  
replied the man being wise.

She granted the boon which he wished  
and moved from him as if she vanished.  
He felt the joy and started again  
to do penance for another gain.

Days and years passed and passed.  
Rains wetted and Sun blazed.  
Never he left the chosen path.  
Never he felt the penance wrath.

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Another Goddess stood in front  
of him and asked - "What do you want?"  
He heard her question and answered boldly -  
"Let me have your energy wholly."

No sooner than she bestowed and left  
he began to chant his mantra at best.  
He saw the Goddess of Wisdom who came  
and praised about her beauty and fame.

"What for you do this great penance?"  
She put a question with a cheerful pretence.  
"I want Wisdom to rule this land.  
Give me, that's all" said he as demand.

"I also like to bear your burden  
in helping the people down-trodden.  
Shall we share what all we possess?  
That will be the best" - said the Goddess.

"How can I spare all I had  
for which I shed my sweat and blood?  
Be kind and give - all your Wisdom  
so that I rule great kingdom."

He said and saw at her face  
which lost all its charm and grace.  
"No more to request" he thought in mind.  
He made a venture and caught her hand.

"Where shall I go? - my dear sage!  
I am pleased with worship and courage.  
Leave my hand" she said with smile  
He left her hand being agile.

"Have a cool bath in the nearby river;  
keep yourself fresh and happier.  
I will tell you a mantra to recite."  
She said and showed a delightful light.  
Her face and talk boosted his faith.

He moved with her to take a bath.  
He stepped in water looking at her  
and slipped in the mud piled in the river.

No one can know what is fate!  
A crocodile swallowed him and ate.  
"No one shall have such a greed!"  
uttered the Goddess and moved indeed.

**Krishnadevaraya** : You have said an excellent poem. Your command on language is commendable.

**Madhava** : Do answer my question. My question is this.

Would you laugh when I weep?  
Would you weep when I laugh?

**Grand path** : Hear my answer.

May I tell you one thing - I am not your enemy.  
May I let you know that I do not have envy.  
Why should I laugh when you weep?!  
Why should I weep when you laugh?!

**Madhava** : I really like your poem.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Can you tell how many stanzas you have said in this court on to-day?

**Grand path** : Sir! I can tell not only the number of stanzas but also the poems again, if you want. I can also narrate the conversation between us not leaving even a single word.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Tell me the number of stanzas first.

**Grand path** : Fifty six.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Oh! wonderful! You have satisfied all of us. Your performance is excellent.

**Grand path** : [with joy] Sir! I want to join as a poet in your court.

**Krishnadevaraya** : May I know - why you want to join here?

## GRAND PATH THE GREAT POET

**Grand path** : I already told you, sir. I want to master Indian languages.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Would you tell us - who are your parents? And what is your family background?

**Grand path** : Sir! You have seen my ability in literature, and it is very easy to comprehend my culture from my compositions. I have answered all your questions undoubtedly in a fantastic manner. Now it is your responsibility to keep up your promise.

**Krishnadevaraya** : I am not going back from my promise. However, I like to know your particulars. It is a pleasure for me to know the names of your parents, who gave birth to an intelligent son like you.

**Grand path** : Sir! kindly first give me your appointment. Then I will disclose the names of my parents.

**Krishnadevaraya** : [Seeing Grand path with astonishment] My word is my order. I have appointed you as a poet and charged you as one of the poets in my court.

[Grand path removes his shirt on his back and shows his back to Krishnadevaraya. A thread was seen on his shoulder.]

**Krishnadevaraya** : [after a little thinking surprisingly] I am able to recognise! You are the son of Sri Tatacharya, our great priest. I am able to remember you as a boy who came to me several years back with a cut on your back, from left to right on your back, being caned by your father Tatacharya. Am I right?!

**Grand path** : Yes, sir! I am the son of Sri Tatacharya.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Your name is Ganapathi. Am I right?!

**Grand path** : Yes sir!

[All look at him with surprise]

**Krishnadevaraya** : May I know who is there?

[Vikram enters]

**Vikram** : My lord! I am here.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Go and tell - our great priest Tatacharya immediately - I want to see him.

**Vikram** : As you order, Sir.

[Vikram exits]

**Timmarusu** : This is really an auspicious day for our priest Tatacharya and to his family. Tatacharya has been suffering for the last several years as he has been not able to find his son.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : Sir! why did he beat his son like that?!

**Krishnadevaraya** : It is really an interesting story. When Ganapathi was a boy of ten years Tatacharya made him to learn Vedas and Upanishads. Then he started teaching him Sastras, Puranas and Kavyas. One day Ganapathi who was about twelve or thirteen refused to learn any more. He declared that he would not study any Sastra or Kavya for some years. His father insisted that he must study. He also told Ganapathi that Ganapathi must become a great poet and he must be able to defeat all the poets in our court. But Ganapathi refused to study for several months. Then Tatacharya who got annoyed with Ganapathi's behaviour used to beat him every day. One day Tatacharya lost his temper and broke a cane on the back of Ganapathi. Then Ganapathi came to me and made a complaint showing the horrible bruise on his back. He also demanded that his father must be punished with a cane. I called his father and advised him, in the presence of Ganapathi not to beat him like that. But Ganapathi got angry as I did not beat his father. However, I pacified him. Then after some days Ganapathi left his house. To-day it is really the luck of Tatacharya. Ganapathi has come back.

**Timmarusu** : How could you learn English?!

**Madhava** : How could you go to England?

**Grand path** : I left my house with anger and visited several cities and temples. Wherever I went, I went on reciting some mantras in Vedas. Being fascinated by my tone people gave me a few rupees in every temple. One day I was in Kallikota on the shore of Arabian sea. I was looking at the sea and uttering a mantra loudly with a clear voice. Then some people got down from a ship and came there. They were in a mixed colour of white and red. They asked my name. Initially I could not follow them as they were talking in English - an unknown language to me at that time. However, they asked my name again and again by telling-name, name, name. Somehow I could follow name as some word related to 'namam'. Then I answered them - "Ganapathi". However, as they could not follow me, they looked at my face. On seeing at the three vertical lines on my face, they called me as Grand path.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Then..

**Grand path** : Then they asked me - "do you know cooking?" I said - "I know cooking very well." Then they asked me to go along with them. I agreed to travel with them as it was very fascinating for me to travel on a ship over the waves of the sea.

**Tenali Ramakrishna** : How could you spend your life there for so many years? How could you master English?

**Grand path** : Initially for some years I cooked several Indian dishes for the Britishers. They were very happy with my cooking. I prepared south Indian dishes such as sambar, rasam, curd mixed with vegetables, dosa, dahivada, upma and several sweets. They went on eating all those with utmost joy. However, after some months I got fed up with such a profession. Then I joined as a servant in a big book stall. There I started reading books. I read the books of several English poets and novelists. After some years I went on giving some poetry art shows which are similar to our 'avadhanam'.

[Vikram and Tatacharya enter]

**Vikram** : My lord! our priest has come.

**Krishnadevaraya** : Come in. Come in. See--your son has come back. He has become a very great poet in English. He has come from England.

**Timmarusu** : Krishnaraya! You are speaking English in the same swing with Tatacharya also. Tatacharya does not know English.

[Tatacharya looks at his son and embraces him with great joy]

END

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## **AN APPEAL TO ALL**

*Dear Reader / Friend / Student*

It is a pleasure for me to inform you that we have established a cultural society named 'Bharateeya Lalita Kala Peetham' at Prasant Nagar, in Hyderabad.

The organisation conducts various types of cultural programmes related to literature, music, dance, drama, drawing and painting. These activities are intended to induce and nurture human values and they are expected to foster unity and integrity.

The organisation is planning to start a magazine named BHARATI in English in near future. It also intends to project Indian culture and Literature on Internet.

The subscription for life membership is Rs. 1000/- if the member is in India, and \$ 100/- or its equivalent if the member is residing in abroad. The annual membership is Rs. 100/- or \$ 10/-.

A person who pays an amount of Rs. 5000/- or U.S.A. \$ 500 will be considered as patron of the society.

May I request you to donate generously for the progress of this cultural organisation.

Thanking you,

*Yours sincerely*

**V. Umakanta Sastry**



**Dr. Vellanki Umakanta Sastry**, born on 28-02-1938 at Kottakota, Mahaboob Nagar District in Andhra Pradesh, had his primary education at his native place Nagulavaram, Vinukonda Taluq, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh. He had his high School and College education in Guntur and Narasaraopet in Andhra Pradesh. He did his M.A. in Mathematics from Osmania University, Hyderabad, and Ph.D. from Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur.

He worked as a Professor of Mathematics in I.I.T., Kharagpur, during 1965-1998.

He guided several research scholars for Ph.D. in Mathematics and Computer Science, and several M. Tech. Students in computer Science. He published several research papers in journals of international repute.

Currently he is interested in writing poetry and plays in Telugu as well as English. He has published (1) Sri Viswakalyana Bhagavatam, (2) Sri Venkateswara Kirti Ratnamala, (3) Lalita Bhava Geetalu and (4) Viswa Santi Satakam in Telugu, and (5) Grand Path the Great Poet in English.